

Parent's Guide:

About UCLC



UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA

We See Tomorrow in Every Child



UCLC goes above & beyond
And is **QUALITY RATED** at Step 4

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Meet The Team

The Administrative Team

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Learning Center Teaching Team

Tasha Bonn , Purple Family Teacher B.S. Early Childhood Education	Tasha.n.bonn.2@UND.edu	July 2016
Neoni Troxel , Purple Family Teacher MA Learning Development and Family Sciences B.A. Advocacy for Diverse Young Learners	Neoni.troxel@und.edu	September 2021
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Heather Seim , Yellow Family Teacher B.S. Early Childhood Education	Heather.seim@UND.edu	August 2000
Amy Peterschick , Yellow Family Teacher B.S. General Studies Minor Early Childhood	Amy.peterschick@und.edu	October 2006-May 2019 April 2021
Monica Jackson , Blue Family Teacher B.S Early Childhood Education	Monica.jackson@UND.edu	April 2018
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Pictures and information about the UCLC Caregiver Team is available on the website: www.und.edu/uclc

Mission Statement

The mission of UCLC works on multiple, intersecting levels: to provide quality, educational child care in keeping with the best practices in the field of Early Childhood Development; to provide interactive, experiential learning opportunities for UND's students; to provide a research site that will increase national knowledge about families and young children; to contribute to a vibrant campus climate by supporting cultural diversity; by offering a summer program that brings school-age children to the UND campus; and by supporting the recruitment and retention of faculty members, students, and international scholars.

Philosophy

The University Children's Learning Center's objective is three-fold:

1. To provide quality early care and education for young children.
2. To develop a partnership with each family, which enhances the opportunity to provide individualized early care and education for children. Family-teacher communication is highly valued. Daily communication is the foundation of that partnership. UCLC welcomes family involvement and interaction with children throughout the day.
3. To provide UND students with an environment in which they can acquire learning experiences in the field of Early Childhood Education.

Parent's Responsibilities at UCLC

You, as the parent, play a critical role in the early education of your young child. You have responsibilities to UCLC that are important to the early care and education provided. It is important that you, your child's teachers, and UCLC administrators work as a team. By doing this, your child will have the best chance of reaching his/her highest potential. Your responsibilities, while not limited to, include:

1. Establishing a routine for drop off and pick up.
2. Signing your child in upon arriving and signing your child out upon leaving. In the event we must evacuate the premises, the sign in/out sheet is the most accurate reflection of which children are present and need to be accounted for.
3. Communicating with your child's teachers – this cannot be stressed enough. If something is going on in a child's life, it is imperative that their teacher know about it. This alerts the teacher to the possibility that your child may need some extra comfort or support. Strict confidentiality is maintained by all employees at UCLC.
4. Asking questions! Everything that occurs at UCLC is going to have an impact on your child, so it is important that you know what is happening and why.
5. Talking about anything this is a concern to you about your child's care. If you see or hear something that you question, bring it to the attention of the administrative team or contact Child Care Licensing at 701-787-8540.

Parent's Rights at UCLC

UCLC teachers, caregivers, and volunteers believe that families are of primary importance in children's development; parents are the child's first teacher. The Learning Center strives to enter into a partnership with families; one in which both sides are committed to the well-being of the child. Families, as defined by UCLC, include all adults, (i.e., parents, guardians, grandparents, aunts/uncles, etc.) committed to being involved in educating, nurturing, and advocating for the young child.

For UCLC to uphold their side of this partnership, parents have the right to:

- Visit the Learning Center during the hours of operation, without prior notice.
- Be informed about the Learning Center's philosophy, policies, curriculum, assessment process, cultural practices, and personnel qualifications.
- Request and receive daily written information about their child.
- Participate in any activities or events sponsored by the Learning Center.
- Be heard and respected for individual parenting styles.
- Be respected for their individual family structures, culture, language, customs, and beliefs to ensure a culturally consistent environment for your young child.

- Be respected for individual childrearing values.
- Be included in decision that affect your child growth, development, and learning.
- Receive timely and accurate information about your child's growth, development, and learning.
- Have a voice in the development of policies and procedures when they impact children and/or families.
- Confidentiality, except in situations outlined by the ND Mandated Reporting Law (<https://www.nd.gov/dhs/services/childfamily/cps/>).

Emergent Curriculum

The Learning Center uses Emergent Curriculum to create developmentally appropriate learning experiences intentionally designed to meet the individual needs of each child. It is based on the philosophy that children learn best when early childhood educators' focus is on being responsive to children's individual interests, as well as class interests, to create learning experiences that are meaningful. Children's active participation, teachers building a relationship with each child, flexible and adaptable teaching methods built on inquiry- and play-based learning are important aspects of the philosophy behind an emergent curriculum approach to teaching young children. Learning experiences are often child-initiated or based on a teacher's observation of a child's interest or developmental learning task.

To create an emergent curriculum learning experience teachers closely observe children at play to discover what they are interested in at this time. Next, teachers and children creatively brainstorm with one another to determine a plan of action for investigating the topic of interest.

Each emergent curriculum is designed to promote children's physical, social, emotional, language, intellectual, and aesthetic development. The environment is prepared/organized based on close observation of the children's play to learn their interests and the teacher's professional knowledge of early childhood education. The children are encouraged to make decisions about their play, actively explore their environment, solve problems, discover new ideas, and be creative.

Emergent Curriculum is play-based. The teachers understand how children benefit from play, rather than a more formal paper, pencil, and workbook approach. Teachers instill in children a life-long love of learning because they have fun while they are learning, and it is exciting to celebrate new knowledge or skills gained through their playing.

Emergent Curriculum allows teachers to respect each child's unique learning style. It encourages children to become deeply vested in a caring community with other children who are eager to learn. It is an active way of learning, where the children reach out and gain new skills and knowledge.

The child's sustained interest in the topic is followed, therefore, an Emergent Curriculum may last 3 hours or 10 weeks. Teachers follow the children by helping them develop hypotheses, test their ideas, retest when necessary, and determine their next set of questions. The cycle continues down a winding path, in which teachers provide the materials and the environment that allows the children to investigate. All the learning experiences are designed to ensure that children meet the ND Early Learning Guidelines and the ND Pre-kindergarten Standards, but because the children guide the topics, they may not notice that learning is happening.

Assessment and Teaching Strategies Gold

The Learning Center teachers can assure you that your child is meeting the necessary benchmarks to ensure they will be kindergarten ready. Authentic assessment is occurring along with the learning experiences. Teachers are observing, assessing, and documenting all the learning that is occurring. This allows them to note each child's current level of growth and development and plan for the next steps to continue their learning.

The University Children's Learning Center utilizes a valid and reliable online assessment tool, Teaching Strategies Gold (TS Gold), to document and record their observations of individual children's learning on an on-going basis. TS Gold utilizes identified objectives that meet the ND Early Learning Guidelines. The guidelines are used to assess individual children's growth on a developmental continuum. The objectives are focused around four (4) domains: social/emotional, cognitive, physical, and language. Additionally, UCLC uses TS Gold to assess the math and literacy content areas.

Teachers at the Learning Center utilize the developmental continuum on TS Gold to effectively plan and implement learning experiences for the class and learning goals for each individual child. Individual progress reports are generated using TS Gold and will be shared with families once during the fall and once during the spring. The progress reports will provide an overview of each child's current level of development in the four domains and some of the content areas. Parents may ask teachers for progress updates between conferences.

All experienced teachers are required to successfully complete an online Inter-Rater Reliability Training to ensure the validity and reliability of their decisions regarding each child's growth and development. This training is repeated every three (3) years.

Nature Explore Outdoor Classroom

UCLC has two Nationally Certified Nature Explore Outdoor Classrooms. One is designed for the preschoolers and one for the toddlers. You will see logs for climbing on, walking across, and jumping off. You will see stumps for rolling around, walking along, and building. We have tree cookies – round chunks cut from trees and branches of various sizes that allow the children to carry heavy loads and build unique structures. Our outdoor classroom has an Akimbra or a Marimba for creating wonderful music. You will also see children pounding real nails with real hammers.

Teachers are often asked about the children getting hurt in our Outdoor Classroom. The reality is that children can get hurt doing any activity. The key is providing as many safety nets and securities as possible. We do this in several ways, particularly in having a sufficient amount of supervision at all times. Hammers and nails are never taken out unless one teacher can devote his/her complete attention to this activity. A teacher is always on hand to walk beside a child practicing walking across a log to hold their hand or just offer encouragement, as well as monitor how many children are on a given log or how closely they are walking to one another.

The Outdoor Classroom serves many purposes, such as helping children learn about the world through play in a natural setting; planting, growing, nurturing, and eating healthy foods they have grown themselves; and teaching children to take risks appropriately. The immediate benefits of taking appropriate risks is the self-confidence that is built. The children are proud of themselves when they accomplish something that is hard and little bit risky.

During outdoor activity, the teacher may ask child to consider the following questions:

- What do you think could happen if you...?
- How could you play safely?
- What is a safer way this could be done?

Teachers are encouraging children to think through their actions. The long-term benefit is that children are learning to process through the risks of an activity. They are doing it when it is safe because they have a teacher right there helping them to think of the possibilities and assess the type of risk that exists. Allowing children to practice this type of risk assessment will instill the importance of assessing decisions and outcomes.

Additionally, children are going to be digging, planting, and playing in dirt and mud. UCLC understands the inconvenience of the dirty clothes, as well as understands the important learning that occurs when getting dirty. The National Wildlife Federation put out a written report in 2012 that outlines the many benefits of getting dirty when playing including to the child's immune system, their cardiovascular system, their mental health, and many other health benefits.

The UCLC teachers ask that you send your child dressed to play and get dirty, because chances are they will get messy daily.

How Young Children Learn

- Young children learn through doing. They are active human beings, and they learn best when they are totally involved and have space in which they can be active.
- Young children learn through a concrete, hands-on, manipulative approach; through handling objects, children discover relationships in their everyday world.

- Young children learn through real-life experiences such as a trip to the post office or a visit to a pet store, and in so doing, discover what their world is like.
- Young children learn through their senses; through opportunities to touch, to taste, to hear, and to see. Children learn to understand their world through exploration.
- Young children learn through play. Play is the most complete of all educational processes. It is the young child's way of learning, exploring, and understanding the world, as well as a source of pleasure. Concepts are developed along with a background information as teachers plan activities, which capitalizes on children's natural curiosity and interests. In this environment of play, children test new ideas, practice new skills, and begin to see relationships.

Learning Goals

General Goals

- To create an environment that promotes discovery, divergent thinking, continual growth in abilities, and positive self-image.
- To provide an educational program to meet the needs of each individual child with concern for his/her interests, special needs, and special talents.
- To provide opportunities for children to grow and develop through exploration and experimentation with various learning materials and activities.
- To provide stimulating activities that are developmentally appropriate.
- To foster cultural awareness and appreciation.
- To provide a nurturing environment in which each child is respected as a person and encouraged to be a member of a caring community.

Specific Goals

Physical Development

The Learning Center pledges to help children develop physically by:

1. Structuring a clean and pleasant environment.
2. Providing for rest, sleep, and nutritional needs.
3. Encouraging self-help skills in the areas of toileting, washing, eating, and dressing.
4. Promoting healthy habits conducive to good physical health.
5. Developing children's knowledge of the necessity for safety habits.
6. Providing opportunities for large and small muscle activities that enhance coordination, dexterity, balance, rhythm, strength, and endurance.

Social and Emotional Development

The Learning Center pledges to help children develop socially and emotionally by promoting:

1. A positive self-concept in regard to physical appearance, worthiness, gender identity and skills.
2. The ability to trust others to meet needs, as well as the ability to be independent and meet their own needs.
3. Acceptance and expression of feelings.
4. Sensitivity to the feelings and views of others.
5. Play activity with peers (observation, parallel, associative, and cooperative play).
6. The ability to resolve conflicts with peers in positive ways.
7. The ability to feel comfortable and to contribute when in a school family and eventually to enjoy being part of that school family.
8. The acceptance and appreciation of individual differences and cultural differences.

Language Development

The Learning Center pledges to help children develop language by offering children opportunities to:

1. Hear basic vocabulary and an enriched vocabulary used in a meaningful context.
2. Express needs and wants.
3. Talk about meaningful experiences with adults and with peers.
4. Describe objects, events, places, and relations.

5. Express feelings in words (happy, sad, angry, lonely, frustrated, scared, etc.).
6. Have one's own language written down by an adult and read back.
7. Encounter and use print in a variety of natural ways.
8. Have fun with language: rhyming, making up stories, singing, listening to poems, songs, and stories.
9. Maintain the family's native language.

Intellectual Development

The Learning Center pledges to help children develop intellectually by involving them in a process that provide opportunities for:

1. Developing curiosity, wonder and the asking of questions.
2. Exploring actively with all the senses (observing, touching, tasting, hearing and smelling).
3. Discovering cause and effect.
4. Making decisions -- choosing materials, activities, and purposes.
5. Developing creativity, imagination and original idea.
6. Problem solving.
7. Representing thoughts and ideas, objects and actions.
8. Understanding number and time concepts.

Respecting Diversity

At the University Children's Learning Center diversity is valued and respected. During a staff meeting the following concepts were listed to discuss with children in an attempt to recognize similarities and differences in their ethnic backgrounds:

- How "family" is defined
- Art
- Care of extended family - young and old
- Music
- Homes, architecture, and décor
- Foods
- Language
- Traditions and holidays
- Special talents
- Dress
- Educational systems, philosophy
- Concept of time
- Parenting style and discipline
- Games
- Ways of showing respect-customs

Ways children can be taught about the above:

- ✓ Have multicultural crayons and markers available
- ✓ Have little people of different cultures available in Lego and Block areas
- ✓ Talk with children, observing and describing likenesses and differences
- ✓ Talk about customs/traditions that become evident in the classroom
- ✓ Display, observe, and talk about family photographs
- ✓ Display and share books that show the diversity among cultures
- ✓ Study visuals in the Color Area to be certain they represent diverse cultures
- ✓ Post language charts which will help children to learn each other's languages
- ✓ Talk about/learn each other's languages
- ✓ Sing songs in each other's languages, chart songs
- ✓ Cook food, taste foods from different cultures
- ✓ Invite families to participate in the activities listed above

English Language Learners

The University Children's Learning Center is part of a large vibrant university campus with families from around the world. The children enrolled at the Learning Center may represent many different cultures as well as languages. Many families enroll their children at the Learning Center because they want them to become fluent in English. Teachers will endeavor to learn a few words in each represented language. Children enrolled at the Learning Center with limited English Language skills will be encouraged to participate as fully as possible in all aspects of the curriculum and schedule, while receiving support from their teachers and peers. At the same time, UCLC will honor the child's native tongue by actively encouraging families to continue to use their first language when they communicate with one another. The Learning Center will never send the message to any family that they must only use English, particularly at home.

It is important to note that some children who are raised in bilingual or trilingual homes show language delays until they are about four or five years of age. These delays are not unusual and are to be expected. Children are organizing the language(s) in their brains and sorting through different syntax structures. When this occurs, the teacher is expected to gently name the missing English word by repeating what the child has said with the appropriate English word as a tool to model language.

Serving Children with Special Needs

The University Children's Learning Center often has children who have been identified through screening and testing processes as having special needs. Experienced Teachers will attend any meetings that impact their work with the child, such as an IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan) or IEP (Individual Educational Program), called by the child's team of specialists. Experienced Teachers will include recommendations developed in such meetings in their lesson plans and programming for the child. The child will be included in all Learning Center activities and reasonable accommodations to the environment will be made to best meet the individual needs of the child. The program will accept all children with special needs if it is deemed to be an appropriate placement for the child by the child's team of specialists. UCLC observes the right to limit the number of children with special needs based on the needs of the classroom.

To gain an understanding of the child's individual needs, UCLC requests a written Health Care Plan from the child's medical provider and/or family member(s) with information related to the child's special needs. Information may include a description and/or definition of the diagnosis, general information for emergency, and required care such as usual medications and procedures.

Toddler Specific Information

Potty Training

The toddler teachers will visit with you about potty training your child. Many factors need to be considered, such as the child's language skills, level of independence, personal temperament, and physical abilities. Together, you and the teachers will discuss your child's readiness and the toileting routines from home and school.

Until your child is potty trained, you will be responsible to provide diapers, wipes, and any necessary ointments for your child.

Daily Sheets

The toddler teachers will provide each family with a daily sheet that contains important information about your child's eating, toileting, napping, and playing. This daily communication will serve as a way to inform you when your child will need more diapers, extra clothes, and various other related supplies.

Mealtimes

All food served at UCLC is prepared at UND Dining Services by individuals trained in safe food handling practices. All meals are appropriate for all ages of children enrolled at UCLC. Any special dietary restrictions must be discussed with the assistant director.

All toddlers will be served Whole milk (unless there is a specific medical restriction) until they reach 24 months of age, as required by the Department of Human Services, Child Care Center Regulations, and the USDA Food Program, Child and Adult Food Program.

All food will be served to the toddler children. It will be cut into appropriately sized pieces to prevent choking. A teacher or student caregiver will, at all times, sit at the table with the children as they eat. Mealtimes are considered a social activity in which many developmental skills are being practiced.

Transitioning from the Toddler Room to a Preschool Room

Children will transition from the Red Family (toddler room) to the Purple, Yellow, Blue, or Green Family on or around their 3rd birthday. The following items are considered before moving a child from the toddler classroom to a preschool classroom:

- The child's chronological age
- The child's developmental readiness to move
- Availability in a preschool classroom

The decision to move a child will be made as a team with input from the toddler teachers, the proposed preschool teachers, the administrative team, and you. The following routine will be followed as much as possible: A minimum of four (4) weeks in advance of the child beginning to visit for their transition date, you will receive an email indicating the proposed transition. This email will tell you which color family UCLC is proposing to transition your child to, a proposed schedule of dates and times to visit with the transition date clearly marked, and an opportunity for you to provide input. You will be encouraged to visit with the new teachers to learn about their classroom. Their email addresses will be provided in the email. The administrative team will make every effort to introduce you to the new teachers. Prior to visiting, the new teachers will periodically seek your child out to introduce themselves and spend some time getting to know the child in the toddler classroom, outdoors, and/or in the gym. This will provide your child with some familiarity with the teachers prior to going to that classroom to visit.

You may request a specific color family. The request will be honored when possible, based on availability and best interests of the new classroom as a whole.

Each transition is designed to meet the needs of the individual child. Some children are excited to move to the preschool classroom and may enthusiastically join their new color family. Other children may require a longer period to adjust to the new environment. Teachers will work together to develop a visiting schedule based on the needs of the child.

Tuition will change on the 1st of the month in which the child turns 3 years old, regardless of when the transition occurs.

Arrival and Departure

- While signing your child in, encourage them to put their coat and/or other belongings in their cubby and to wash their hands. Learning Center teachers will also help to direct your child to complete these duties.
- Please be sure the teacher in your child's classroom is aware of your child's arrival. You may do this by saying hello or in some other way making contact with the teacher. This is a good time to let your child's teacher know any important information that may affect your child's day.

- At the time of pick up, please be sure the teacher is aware of your child's departure by talking with the teacher or in some other way of connecting with them. This is a good time for the teacher to let you know any important information that may affect your child's evening.
- Families of toddlers remember to get the daily sheet from the teacher.

Typical Pre-school Daily Schedule

7:00-8:30	Arrival and Center Time
8:30-9:00	Breakfast
9:00-9:30	Circle Time
9:30-10:00	Family Time
10:15-10:45	Outdoor Play
11:00-11:30	Lunch
11:30-11:45	Quiet moments of Reading
11:45-1:00	Nap/Rest Time
1:00-3:00	Afternoon Center Time
3:00-3:30	Snack, Circle Time
3:30-4:00	Family Time
4:00-5:00	Outdoor Play
5:00-5:15	Center Time (only one or two areas are open)
5:15	Gather in the Book Areas of Select Classrooms
5:30	Center Close

Typical Toddler Daily Schedule

7:00- 8:30	Arrival and Center Time
8:30- 9:00	Breakfast
9:00- 9:30	Diapering and Transition to Outdoor Center Time
9:30- 9:50	Outdoor Center Time
9:50-10:50	Indoor Center Time <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offer reading or read with children who ask to be read to• Offer children an opportunity to participate in a Family Time Activity• Diapering as necessary
10:50-11:00	Clean the Classroom and Wash Hands before for Lunch
11:00-11:30	Lunch Time and Diapering as Necessary
11:30-11:45	Transition to Nap Time <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Put on soft music• Lay out cots and blankets
11:45- 2:00	Naptime <ul style="list-style-type: none">• As children awake they are encouraged to play away from the sleeping children
2:00- 2:30	Diapering as necessary and Center Time
2:30- 3:00	Outdoor Center Time
3:00- 3:30	Snack
3:30- 5:00	Center Time <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offer reading or read with children who ask to be read to• Offer children an opportunity to participate in a Family Time Activity• Diapering as necessary

Administrative History

Gwendolyn M. Puckett	2020-present	Director, Child Care Services
Tina M. Adams	2020-present	Assistant Director, Child Care Services
Dawnita S. Nilles	2015 – 2020	Director, Child Care Services
Gwendolyn M. Puckett	2015-2020	Assistant Director/Curriculum Specialist
Jo-Anne A. Yearwood	2015 - present	T&L Liason
Jo-Anne A. Yearwood	1998 – 2015	Director, Child Care Services
DeLaine (Lizakowski) McGurran	1978- 2016	Administrative Assistant
Dr. Michael Gallo	2012 - 2020	ECE Advisor to UCLC
Dr. Glenn Olsen	2000 - 2012	ECE Advisor to UCC
DeLaine McGurran & Dr. Sara Hanhan	1998	Interim Co-Directors
Dr. Sara Hanhan	1986 – 2000	ECE Advisor to UCC
Gayle Nelson	1992 – 1998	Director, Child Care and Family Services
Susan Block Moe	1991 – 1994	Education Coordinator
Lorna Greene	1990 – 1992	Director, Child Care and Family Services
Lee Hulteng	1989 – 1991	Graphics
Laurel Hulteng	1988 – 1991	Educational Director
Debi Furches	1987 – 1988	Educational Director
Gayle Nelson	1983 – 1987	Educational Director
Wayne Kuklinski	1978 – 1983	Educational Director
Mae Marie Blackmore	1972 – 1990	Administrative Director